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| Document title | Status of national management plans for marine mammals |
| Code | 3-2 |
| Category | CMNT |
| Agenda Item | 3 – Seals in the Baltic Sea |
| Submission date | 17.8.2020 |
| Submitted by | Secretariat |

Background

In the Baltic Sea Action Plan, HELCOM Contracting Parties have committed themselves to, by 2012, finalize national management plans as part of the measures taken to safeguard the long-term viability of the Baltic seal populations according to HELCOM Recommendation 27-28/2.

With reference to the Outcome of SEAL 6-2012 (paragraph 3.4), the Secretariat compiled this document based on the reports by the Contracting Parties on the status of their seal management plans. The document was used as background documentation for the HELCOM 2013 Copenhagen Ministerial Meeting and has since been annually updated by the Seal expert group. After SEAL 9-2015 the name of the document was changed to 'Status of national management plans for marine mammals' to also cover management plans for harbour porpoise.

SEAL 9-2015 agreed to review new and revised national management plans to assess the use of the guidelines and for the Contracting Parties to inform the Secretariat when new plans are adopted and make them available in advance of the annual HELCOM Seal meetings.

This document contains the latest available information on the status of national management plans for marine mammals as updated by EG MAMA 13-2019.

Action requested

Contracting Parties are invited to

- review the information and update old information (passed years highlighted);
- inform the Secretariat (Jannica.haldin@helcom.fi) on possible new or updated management plans;
- update information on the current status of management plans for marine mammals and information on hunting and regulation quotas by **31 August 2020**;
- check and if needed update the web links (links that don't work have been highlighted)

Table 1. Countries with national seal management plans.

| Country | Status of the Management Plans and Species included | Adopted in for the years | Planned Updates | Hunting and regulation quotas | Summary: Most important topics of the MPs | Websites | Additional information |
|---------|---|--|---|--|---|--|---|
| Denmark | MPs for grey seal and harbour seal exist | 2005 for 2005-2010 and is still valid | Review process due in 2015 | | | GREY SEAL and HARBOUR SEAL (summary in English) | Surveys of seals and mammals are being carried out, including SCANS surveys (Outcome of HELCOM SEAL 6/2012). Review process likely to be carried out in late 2017. |
| Estonia | MPs for grey and ringed seals were adopted in 2015 | Adopted in 2015 for 2015-2019 | 2018 ringed seals and 2019 grey seals | | | | The government is revising the management plans on grey and ringed seals after every five years. Any numbers of seals by-catch are currently rough estimates and the ministry wishes to improve and modernise the by-catch monitoring. The aim is to make the society and other sectors more aware of the seals and their environment. The grey seal is in the list of wild game in the Estonian Hunting Act, and hunting started on 2015. Grey seal hunt is included in the management plan, hunting is only licenced hunting, quota is set annually according to census data. |
| Finland | MPs for grey and ringed seal exist Action plan for harbour porpoise exists | 2007 for 2007-2012 and are still valid | Date for the update has not been decided (by the Finnish Wildlife Agency) MP will be updated during the year 2018 Reviewed action plan was released in 2016 (in Finnish and Swedish) | Grey seal (Quota hunting): 1) The Quark-Bothnia Bay 633 individuals 2) South-Western Finland 273 Individuals; and 3) Gulf of Finland 144 individuals. Ringed seal: (Licensed hunting) 1) The Quark-Bothnia Bay 300 individuals. | | GREY SEAL AND RINGED SEAL: ENGLISH FINNISH | The 2007 MPs available at the Webpage of the Ministry of the Agriculture and Forestry (Outcome of HELCOM SEAL 5/2011). The plans are going to be updated during the year 2018 by Finnish Wildlife Agency. |

| Country | Status of the Management Plans and Species included | Adopted in for the years | Planned Updates | Hunting and regulation quotas | Summary: Most important topics of the MPs | Websites | Additional information |
|---------|---|--------------------------|-----------------|---|---|---|---|
| Sweden | <p>MPs for grey seal and harbour seal in Skagerrak and Kattegat (except for the “Kalmarsund population”) are in place.</p> <p>MP for the Kalmarsund population of harbour seal will be updated and reviewed</p> <p>MP for ringed seal: A new draft will be reviewed in spring 2017</p> <p>For harbour porpoise there is a draft that is almost finalized, once it is finished and adopted it will be valid for 5 years</p> | 2012 for 2012- | | <p>Grey seal (protective hunting): 760 individuals divided between 12 counties from Norrbotten to Skåne.</p> <p>Ringed seal (protective hunting): 190 individuals divided between the two counties Norrbotten and Västerbotten (The Quark - Bothnia Bay).</p> <p>Harbour Seal (protective hunting): 390 individuals including the counties of Västra Götaland, Halland and Skåne.</p> | <p>Development of seal safe fishing gear continues.</p> <p>Information and cooperation as a tool to make better understanding between fishery and conservation is a challenging goal.</p> | <p>GREY SEAL</p> <p>HARBOR SEAL</p> | <p>Management plans for grey seals and harbour seals were adopted in 2012. Conflict with fisheries is an issue.</p> <p>Only protective hunting is allowed on seals in Sweden.</p> <p>Regarding protective hunting on harbour seal Skåne only includes the municipalities Båstad, Ängelholm, Höganäs and Helsingborg. Västra Götaland also includes Skagerrak.</p> |

Table 2. Countries with national seal management plans under development or without national seal management plans.

| Country | Status of the Management Plans and Species included | Website | Hunting and regulation quotas | Additional information |
|---------|--|---|-------------------------------|---|
| Latvia | Work has started to develop management plans for the three species | | | More information will be provided in SEAL 12-2018 . |
| Poland | Under development for grey seal For harbour porpoise a management plan was adopted in 2015 (two versions available) | GREY SEAL (draft) HARBOUR PORPOISE (draft) | | Preparation of management plans (in Poland - conservation programmes) for endangered species is one of the main tasks of the General Directorate for Environmental Protection. In Poland draft national management plans for grey seal and harbour porpoise have been developed within the project "Supporting the restitution and protection of Baltic mammals in Poland" co-financed from the EU funds, conducted by WWF Poland in cooperation with Hel Marine Station of the University of Gdansk and the Foundation for the Development of the University of Gdansk. WWF Poland has hired a professional mediatory company to ensure all stakeholder participation and consultation in the development of draft management plans, including fishermen, national and local authorities, scientists, environmentalists, legal advisers etc. In 2012 there were 2 plenary meetings organized as well as 6 working groups meetings (on the topics of: interactions with fisheries /2 meetings/, disturbance, noise and pollution /2 meetings/, research and monitoring /1 meeting/, information, education and social communication /1 meeting/). There were 98 participants from 42 institutions and organisations involved in this process. Draft plans were reviewed by foreign scientists and final versions were prepared by the end of the year 2012. At the beginning of 2013 draft management plans were sent to the General Directorate for Environmental Protection which is responsible for further internal and social consultations, preparation of final versions of documents and their adoption as a part of national legislation. During the meeting with the Ministry of Environment and the General Directorate for Environmental Protection WWF Poland received the information that the process of interdepartmental consultations of both documents will begin not earlier than in the first quarter of 2014 . Consultations for the grey seal management plan are planned for 2015 . Pilot monitoring of marine species and habitats in 2015-2018, including seals and harbour porpoise. Plans for 2017 and until March 2018 : CPODs in 2 regions (Stilo Bank and Pomeranian Bay), plain observations of seals along the Polish coast, plain observations of harbour porpoise in 2 regions (transect observations). |
| Russia | No Management Plans | | | There is no official management plan for the marine mammals in the Russian part of the Baltic sea. In 2017 ringed seal numbers were still very low (100 individuals for whole Gulf of Finland.) Ringed and grey seals of the Baltic sea are protected as a species which are included in the "Red data book of Russian Federation". The seals investigations are bathed on the personal activities of scientists and sponsors support. Ringed seals aircraft survey and start of telemetry investigation have been done in 2017. Seals rehabilitation, survey of grey and ringed seals on haul outs and register of seals mortality was also done in 2017. The seals on the haul outs are in the focus, and there are good haul outs in the southern GOF, in Kurgalsky peninsula, problems are due to by-catch in fishing nets in where half of the population is located. The risks for seals in the Russian part of the Gulf of Finland are strengthening of anthropogenic impact: increase of disturbance, by-catch, increase of traffic of large-capacity vessels and an oil disaster possibility. Another risk is warm winters with lack of ice and snow with increase of predator risk and disturbance. |

Plans for the 2018 are: to make aircraft survey of ringed seals in the Gulf of Finland in collaboration with Estonia and Finland. A boat survey of grey seals in the time fixed by HELCOM for the Baltic sea. Make investigation of seal distribution using GSM tagging to pick up data about foraging region and moving of seals in time when they are not on haul outs. Telemetry study of seals will be done in international collaboration with Estonian specialists. The work with seals rehabilitation, survey of grey and ringed seals on haul outs and register of seals mortality will be continue in the 2018.

Table 3. Countries with no expected management plans.

| Country | Status of the Management Plans and Species included | Hunting and regulation quotas | Additional information |
|-----------|--|-------------------------------|--|
| Germany | No MPs foreseen to be produced MP for harbour porpoise is under development [2016?] | | In the German Baltic Sea there are presently no haul out sites, neither for breeding nor for moulting, whereas resting seals can be observed along the coast, particularly for grey seals in the Greifswald Lagoon and for harbour seals in Wismar Bay (Outcome of HELCOM SEAL 4/2010). All hunting of seals is forbidden in Germany. Some management measures are conducted: All stranding are reported and the cause of death is determined. Reported sightings are also recorded (Outcome of HELCOM SEAL 5/2011). Plans for habitat restoration measures to re-install one important haul-out site that was destroyed by gravel extraction in the early 20th century are not implemented so far due to several reasons. Numbers of seals in this site are monitored twice a month by federal and state authorities and the numbers are gradually increasing (Outcome of HELCOM SEAL 4/2010). |
| Lithuania | No management plans | | <p>No stable seal population. However, resting grey seals can be observed on breakwater rocks near main Klaipėda harbour, other seal species can be observed only very rarely, some of them reported stranded and were taken to rehabilitation facilities. Grey seals are protected under Lithuanian law (no categories) and listed as DD (data deficiency) under IUCN red list categorization in Lithuania.</p> <p>Lithuanian Sea museum (LSM) is monitoring sightings of living and dead seals and is also carrying out rehabilitation of emaciated and sick marine mammals, mainly grey seals. In 2016 12 sightings of living grey seals were reported, 6 pups/weaners were taken for rehabilitation, 4 of them were released the same year. In 2017 11 sightings of grey seals were reported, 2 pups/weaners undergone rehabilitation and 4 were released to the wild. In 2018 24 sightings of grey seals were reported, of them were 13 grey seal pups that undergone rehabilitation. None of them released so far. There is no other monitoring of marine mammals performed.</p> <p>2016 – 9 dead grey seals found, 2017 – 34 dead grey seals found, 2018 – 54 dead individuals found (43 were above 50 kg, 11 weight was not identified, and >50 % were found in June). Photos of dead seals allowed to state that animals were of different sex and age, but adult males and juveniles were predominating. No further examination was performed. Possible shooting wounds could be visible in almost half of animal carcasses. The majority of dead carcasses were found in May-June. Cause of death of stranded individuals was not determined due to lack of financial recourses.</p> <p>Financial funding for Rehabilitation center of marine mammals and birds was approved by Lithuanian Ministry of Environment and 1.18 mln. Euro were allocated from EU funds. The project should be finished by 2020. In collaboration with interested institutions rehabilitation center should carry out several functions: rehabilitation and monitoring of health status of Baltic seals and marine birds; raising public awareness towards the conservation of marine mammals and birds; collaboration with Lithuanian and international universities and research centers for research, education and data exchange.</p> |

In 2013-2014 Lithuanian Fund for Nature (LFN) performed a survey to evaluate the loss of coastal fisheries due to grey seal activity. The estimated damage was around 100 000 Eur per year to Lithuanian fisheries.

In 2014 based on LFN project results and fishermen complaints Ministry of Agriculture approved compensations to local small-scale fishermen that use passive gear for the damage by seals and birds. ~ 1 mln. Eur were allocated for compensations from EU funds, EMFF for 2014-2020. Fishermen receive compensations and in return they have to fill separate sheets about seal sightings in their fishing journals. This data was not analysed or looked at by any institutions so far. New project testing grey seal safe/resistant gear (pontoon traps) on Lithuanian coast was launched on 2018 (till 2020). LFN continues to work as a collaborative platform between fishermen and governmental institutions by informing about best conflict (grey seals vs. fishermen) mitigation practices, developing new projects to adapt seal safe and resistant gear on Lithuanian coast and by reducing the negative attitude of fishermen towards grey seals.